family. Babies lacking in merit died at their birth, just as mothers whose merit had run low suffered or died in childbirth.

A soul desiring rebirth flew into the womb of a woman at conception. By care and imitative magical practices, both parents helped the fetus grow but the mother gave the baby its body. Parturition was a joint effort of mother and child, the course and outcome of which was determined by their respective stores of merit. After delivery the child was blessed, his soul seized and tied in, and ritual means taken that he not wander from home throughout life. A post-partum rest of several days was taken beside a hot fire, the purpose of which was both physiological, i.e. to dry the uterus, and ritual, to bring about full "ripe" adulthood.

The fire, which was consecrated, strengthened a woman and made her a better nourisher, mature, more compassionate, and eligible to handle magic and the tender souls of living creatures. Thus she was fitted for her life-calling as a woman. The comparable ceremony of maturation for men, when they too were changed from "raw" to mature, compassionate, and strong males for their calling of fatherhood and leadership, was ordination into the Buddhist priesthood. Only those men and women who had undergone their respective rites of maturation were eligible to handle magic. Men's magic gave power, control and could be aggressive. Women's magic was limited to nurturing purposes, and could never be destructive. The respective areas of magical competence and right were autonomous and rigidly separated on pain of severe sanctions.

This view of the role of women in life and the events of childbirth in the earthly and cosmic scene, had the effect of giving women in childbirth a positive, secure, and relaxed outlook, and an understanding and acceptance of suffering so that they had little fear.

How careers in midwifery, whether professional or amateur were established, and the nature of the specialty and of a practice are discussed.

The understanding of, and the attitudes toward, modern medicine are given along with findings accounting for acceptance or rejection of modern hospital care for parturients. Accepting the changes that were observed in the practices surrounding childbirth proved to be a means of expressing partial withdrawal from the old life of a farmer and a step towards the glitter of urban ways. In the desire to be seen as progressive, the fire rest had been shortened, market products substituted for the consecrated fire, and other urban ways introduced.

For persons interested in introducing changes in the

magical formulae and incantations (khāthā cf. Textor 1969:88-98; 67-79). It was one of the branches of occultism (saiyasāt [Mcf. 1940:895]), the ancient science which sought by magical means to control the forces of the heavens and of earth and to manipulate them in behalf of man's interests and enterprises, whether economic, aesthetic, personal, or other. Some of the other branches were dancing, singing, the agricultural rites, boxing, boat- and house-building, and the life-cycle rites. This powerful wisdom was contained in sacred books at the Buddhist temple where it passed, usually orally, from priest to priest. It could be transmitted away from the temple between men, if they had once been ordained. Its transmission was controlled by ritual teacher-pupil relations, and its use by formal request through presentation of a sacred offering, the khwan khaō (cf. Dūan's Tale p.44). Unauthorized magic did not work because it was not validated by its supernatural discoverer; improper ritual behavior incurred strong supernatural sanctions. Instruction in magic and its use was free except for the token offerings and coin in the khwan khaō. The only rigid obligation was a public annual homage-to-the-teacher ritual (wai khrū).

The persons authorized to handle any part of saiyasāt were called mō. In the context of medicine, mō was translated "doctor." To keep the modern and ancient traditions separate, we shall use the Thai word "mō" throughout this paper for the practitioner of the ancient occult art, reserving the word "doctor" for physicians trained in modern medicine.

The field of medicine was split into categories or specialties. There were, for instance, the exorcisers of spirits or disease objects (mō phī), and the curers (mō raksā) who made up decoctions particularly for element imbalances. Astrologist-foretellers (mō dū) analysed disturbances due to astral confluences; soul-ceremonialists (mō khwan) carried on the khwan-strengthening rites; and the mō sanē specialized in love and hate magic. On a lower plane were masseurs (mō nūat) and midwives (mō tamyāe). No specialist could operate in the field of another unless he had formally acquired that specialty. No limits, though, were set on the number of specialties a person might acquire so that all their lives, mō were open to and seeking new knowledge by pilgrimage, discussion, or visit to a Chinese or modern druggist. The major curing specialties were only in the hands of males, but men and women both practiced the minor branches of midwifery and massaging.19

19. A woman medium (khonsong) who cured when possessed by the spirit of a male mō was not entitled to be called mō. Her special circumstances are discussed in "Magic and Maturity."

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775 Man was higher on the scale than woman.[20] Progress toward
[562] Nipphan was not assured but had to be earned. With sinful behavior a person might be catapulted back to being a beast. He who stole would "be born and die 500 times before he could even grow up." Almost everyone had to be sent to purgatory
[776] where demons carried on tortures until he had suffered enough to be released for rebirth. The evil spirits (phī) that wandered frighteningly in Bang Chan were part of the legions whose job was to increase deserved suffering on this earth.

771 The people of Bang Chan felt they could discern even
782 of themselves who was meritful and who was not according to
828 human circumstances, constitution, and behavior. A meritorious person was healthy, happy, and successful in all undertakings. He enjoyed good health and long life, a kindly personality, many fine children, wealth, high status,
[775] intelligence, and luck. Astrologically, he was born on a day of good confluences, of gold and auspicious signs. He who lacked merit, because of sins committed perhaps many ages ago, was born on an unfortunate day. He suffered early death,
[763] deformities, unhappiness, poverty, and had a cruel nature. Illness, whether supernatural or natural, whether induced by wind or sorcery or what, struck as part of the suffering brought on by former sin. It was accepted in the conviction that whoever suffered had brought it on himself. When merit ran out, or when sin cancelled out and then exceeded one's merit, suffering and premature death occurred, despite all human efforts. Because of the prevalence of illness and of life's difficulties, major and minor, no one, no matter how outwardly fortunate and so evidently meritorious, had at this earthly level of existence enough merit to escape some suffering and frustration. By the same token, though, no person was without hope. By making merit or by suffering in this life, existence would be happier in the next. The making of merit was in the forefront of daily conscious effort and even conversations of the people of Bang Chan.

751
• 784 The long-range protection against all illness was to
[577] live virtuously and make merit. However, to guard against temporary supernatural intrusions, everyone possessed and usually wore Buddha lockets and other amulets. Some
[782] underwent tatooing, men having Cambodian or other figures,
[304] women, 2 small dots tatooed on the torso under the arm.

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20. Man had achieved greater "other-worldliness" while women were more bound by the phenomena of the flesh (cf. Kirsch, 1961).

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There were also the protecting rites of the life cycle, and Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and animist rituals to ameliorate events in every walk of life.

seen childbirth not once, but many times, so willing hands abounded. So, one day, Dŭan went to Sāi. "Will you help me, and come when I call you? Please do not go far at that time." Sāi agreed, knowing in her heart she had expected to care for Dŭan. No day could be calculated because the baby decided when to be born. Dŭan came home very fast, for doing so would help ensure a fast delivery.

As the weeks passed, Song, the new child's father, collected outside the house a great cone of sakae firewood from their land. This wood was for the post-partum fire beside which Dŭan would lie for many days. As the fire had to be very hot, a great deal of wood was needed, all to be collected beforehand. Song also covered the outside of the pile with thorny woods to keep away evil spirits. On her part, Dŭan knew that everything needed for delivery was ready in the house as part of the regular household staples or utensils. Nothing need be bought except possibly a little Borneo camphor to mix with lemon grass for faintness, and alum. The midwife should never bring anything with her because it was essential to use what was in the house. Anything lacking could be quickly borrowed after the pains started. The little cushion on which the baby was to lie was cut, and half-filled with kapok. It was not sewn up, lest it induce by example a closed-up exit from the womb, or suggest a mal-placed or deformed baby which had to be delivered onto a pillow. No one wanted to prepare for such an unhappy event. No clothing was bought for the child ahead of time for then the child might die, and all would have to be destroyed.

Dŭan felt at ease and yet somewhat frightened at the prospect of the pain ahead. At an ordination she attended one night she listened again to the chant she had heard many times:

> "In childbirth a woman has pain all over her body...She is losing her soul and feels so frightened, despairing, and suffering that she throws herself up and down from time to time as if her mind were terribly wounded by the poisonous arrow of a hunter. She is uneasy and moans loudly as if a big mountain had fallen down upon her, and she is supposed to wait for death. She does not recover even if massaged by someone. She does not think of her pain, but tries to save the child's life, when, after the pushing wind comes, he is born" (S.S.).

On other occasions she pondered the deep satisfaction of her maternal role, then laughed in recalling a crafty woman who

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844 "faked labor pains to hold down her errant husband!" or so a sour mother-in-law said (Hauck,ibid.).

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789 Finally, one day, Dūan felt uncomfortable and decided not to go out to plow. Lek prepared for her hot-tasting medicine. When Song came in at eleven from work, he went to the garden, to the little house of the family's protecting spirit (sān phra phūm), lighted incense and offered flowers, asking that it and the ancestors help his wife and keep away evil ghosts. He also prayed for help of the ancestors. Mī went to ask Sāi not to go far away that day and to ask in what exact direction to push over the woodpile. Sāi replied, "Push it over in the direction the snake lies today, so that Dūan and the wood lie parallel with their heads and its apex in the same direction to the north and east. Never let them be to the south and west." A passing boatman saw the wood go over. "There's news to tell!" he said. "The child is being born!" Dūan thought she ought to send away her little son, but he refused to go, and stayed by his mother the whole time. Song's sister came by for a visit, but stayed to help after getting word to their parents. It was no time for visitors, especially men, but any helpers, male or female, were welcome. Lek prepared the all-important ceremonial gift, the khwan khāo (soul-rice) for the midwife, which validated, and insured the use of, her private magic. She put a bunch of bananas, 7 betel pepper leaves, 7 areca nuts, flowers, incense sticks, a candle, and 20 baht into a bowl filled with dry rice grains. A little later she strung the holy thread around the 4 walls of the house. On each side she attached "yan," (Skr.: yantra). These protective cloths, about 10 inches square with magical letters and drawings, kept away the terrifying phī krasū spirits, seen as lights at night, who, attracted by bad smell and blood, would creep up the housepost, eat Dūan's blood, intestines, and faeces through her anus. Then Mī went again to Sāi to report that "the pain was increasing." These words were the signal to Sāi that it was time for her come.

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As Dūan was to profit from the magic, it was better that she herself hand the midwife the khwan khāo bowl. Sāi lit the incense and offered the bowl in gratitude to the teacher who had given her her magic. She whispered in the direction of Dūan's head, "All good spirits in the high heavens and in the locality, help and do not obstruct at this delivery! Give happiness to mother and baby!" Placing the bowl on a high place to the side of Dūan's head, she said, "My teacher is long since dead, but will hear this request, and will pass the request and the khwan khāo to her teacher, and so on, back all those thousands

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of generations, to the hermit Phra KhulIsān, who first discovered this magic. He got it from Phra In (Indra). He will make it good."

Dūan was sitting in the main part of the house. Her mother was seated behind her, arms under Dūan's arms, pressing down on the abdomen with every pain. She, Song, and others had taken turns thus supporting Dūan's back all afternoon. Dūan hoped it would not be like the first time when she had screamed with the pain of the tender spot where they constantly pushed. Their toes, digging into her thigh, also had left large bruises. Some women in the area had tried arm ropes, hung from the ceiling, on which to pull, and some women tried lying flat, but sitting while someone pressed was the usual way. Sāi examined Dūan, and announced that labor was not very far along. She moved Dūan around so she faced another direction. "No wonder you are having a hard time," she said. "Your feet were pointing toward the <u>sān phra phūm</u> spirit house and you were not properly in line with today's direction of the celestial prince-snake (<u>Chao Mā</u>). By turning you thus, the baby will be born with, and not against, the scales that lie on the <u>nāk's</u> back. The snake's direction differs each hour of the day, each day in the week, month and season in the year. Today is Monday, so your head must be in the east, but Sundays, for instance, it must be to the north. You must also not face the Great Ghost (<u>phī lūang</u>).[33] Another being to respect is the <u>Chao Krung Phā Li</u> (cf. Texter 487-498). Offerings to him must be at the feet or sides. If offered at the head, he would be angry at your disrespect, and you would have a fever and a terrible time. My grandfather taught me this from his Pali book. His was more accurate than the books in Thai one sees in the market."

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Song was asked to boil up several kettles of water using this <u>rakāe</u> wood. Husbands always did that. "I was recently asked," said Sāi, "to help at a woman's fourth child. I had been there for all the other 3, and for every one her husband was absent, gambling, I heard. He said he did not want to stay there because it was an awful sight. So it is, but there must be a man around, the husband; if he is dead, or gone, then a father or brother. I refused to accept that case because of the husband's neglect."

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The winds that circulated in Duan's body were not speeding

33. Texter (378,423) relates that it makes a complete circle of all directions throughout 24 hours, and its direction of the moment must be avoided.

844 [278] fast enough to break the amniotic sac. Sāi made her a medicine of mung bean and sugar, both of which wet the uterus, and murmured some magic words to help. Later she worked with her hands at the vagina, twisting the sac a bit to break it. Suddenly the sac ruptured.

Now the child was almost there. The head showed well. Sāi sat down directly in front of DŪan to do the pressing herself. With one hand she held or gently pulled on the baby, with the other she pressed on the abdomen with every [789] contraction. As she started in, she said magic words. She worked for an hour--no midwife would press more than that--until at last the child was out. A little boy! With her finger Sāi removed the blood from his mouth, and pucked out the lips. Breathing was slow in coming, so she shook him vigorously, then laid him down. Quickly she chewed up an onion and spit it over his body. "Ah-h-h!" A cry, though not very strong! Seeing the new baby appear, Chai, who up to then had been constantly near his mother, rushed precipitously from the house, and refused to come in for hours, in spite of Song and Lek's coaxing

[787] Everyone had observed an auspicious circumstance: the cord was looped around the baby's neck! This imitation of the holy cord (nongkhon) placed around head and neck in Brahman rites of passage was a rare and good sign. "A cord looped thus could never kill a baby," someone said.

Since the placenta was slow in coming, Sāi prepared to cut the cord while DŪan rested and sipped the fiery snake brand medicine. Depending on circumstances she might cut it [278] before or after the placenta was out. Taking a rhizome of phlai (Ref. 804), a traditional healing root she laid it on a clod of soil brought in from outside. From one of the [412] old bamboo house beams, someone had sliced with a knife a sharp-edged, tapering sliver to serve as a cutter. The cord was stroked 3 times, starting near the baby's stomach "to remove the dirt." Then "something that is in the umbilical cord" was pushed back towards the baby's stomach "to prevent [778] a flow of blood." She measured the cord from the baby's abdomen to his knee, and tied off 2 places in it with the holy unspun cotton cord used ordinarily in rituals. Laying the part between the 2 knots on the phlai on its bed of soil, and saying her magic "w'ayān a sam pa nō," she cut the cord with the bamboo cutter. With a chicken feather [757] which had to come "from the mother's yard," she collected a few spider webs from the rafters, mixed them with coconut oil, and painted them around and on the cord-stump, also "to stop the blood-flow." While doing this, Sāi said, "One midwife I know severs the cord by tying it with the thread at 3 places, then burns it with a flame."

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Lek watched over the baby, while Sāi turned towards Dūan. "One looks to the mother first, unless the baby needs help more." First Sāi gave DŪan medicine for the placenta. She rubbed her hands with alum and tried unsuccessfully to work down (klōm) the slippery placenta. Then she told Dūan to get on her hands and knees, and exert all the force she could. DŪan crept around the floor but it still did not come. Sāi then tried hitting Dūan's back 3 times with DŪan's own pillow. Finally she gave DŪan a leaf of betel pepper to chew, hoping to induce a wind-producing nausea and so push out the placenta. In the end DŪan resumed her sitting position and it was pressed out. So the baby would not get pimples, the placenta was cleaned carefully, then put into an old pot, mixed with 2 dishes [751] of salt, and set aside.

While Lek sewed up the partially completed cushion, Sāi laid the baby along her legs, and washed him with soap. Sometimes she washed the baby before the cord was cut, if the placenta came quickly. She used salt to remove the greasy fat from his body, though would have preferred "fermented tamarind to protect him from pustules that enlarge to sores (rōk phuphōng)." "Soft tissue like a stomach covering his head! What a good sign of progress and fortune!" she exclaimed. [787] She powdered him with face powder (dinaōnphōng), and painted his [278] abdomen with turmeric,[34] "so wind will not make him cry." Covering him with a little piece of old cloth, she laid him on Lek's old winnowing tray (kradong).

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It was the moment to winnow (rōn) the baby, and link it to home and family. While Lek got the holy unspun cord, others placed on the tray with the baby all manner of traditional things to influence the progress and well-being of the child during his lifetime. Sāi put on the phlai, the clod of soil, and the tapered bamboo she had used to cut the cord "because they will never be used again," but actually these things had a far deeper meaning to all present. Song laid on a school exercise book and pencil, so that his son would have knowledge and a good memory. MĪ got a needle for sharp wit. If the baby had been a girl, the needle would have given sewing skills. When all was in readiness, DŪan had to decide on the ones to raise the child aloft, catch the tray as it was dropped, and bless him as the holy thread was tied on. She had to choose these persons carefully, for the child

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34. Other mixtures (used also on the mother) were lime-bergamot lemon; or phlai (if possible the one on which the cord was cut), wānnam (acorus calamus) (Textor:64-66) and mahāhing (asafoetida) with burned betel leaf. These were all to keep out wind.

844 989 852 would later manifest their characteristics. Much as Dūan loved her own mother, Lek ought not to winnow the child because she had had the misfortune to lose 3 babies in infancy. An older person was desirable, for longevity, too, indicated virtue, and the child would then also live long. Of all the women present, besides her mother, Sāi was the one Dūan trusted and respected most, and Sāi had raised healthy babies. Dūan turned to her. "Please winnow and bless the baby." She wanted, as every mother did, to catch and so claim the child for herself.

Sāi seated herself close to Duan, picked up and raised high the tray with the little boy and the auspicious items. Waving the tray in a circular motion slowly from left to right, clockwise, she recited the old words: "Three days a spirit child; on the fourth day, a human child! Whose child is this? Is this the child of a female pot? Of a jar? Come, take this child!" Three times Sāi chanted these old words and on the third, Dūan cried out, "Mine!" The tray with the child was gently tossed in her direction. She caught it as it slid toward her. Then Sāi took the holy thread and tied some around each of the child's wrists and ankles to seize and "welcome" its soul (kānraphkhwan), giving the while the traditional blessing. "Come, khwan! Come my own child! Stay well and eat well! Do not get sick or have fever! Be cool and happy! Feed your father and mother until they are old. Hold the walking stick with the gold head, or the stick with jewels on its top! Stay at home like the bottom of the house post! Watch the house like a cat! Eat and stay here! Never go roaming! Be fat as the golden ash pumpkin, heavy as the long melon, strong as an elephant in must! Be the head priest when ordained and the leader of men when you leave the priesthood! Come, khwan!"[35] Thus Dūan claimed the child for herself and for her family, to nourish and raise. Because such a fine person as Sāi had started this son on its life-habits, and Dūan was already sparing no efforts in assuring his progress, he would be a good boy, and reciprocate her pain and effort.

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[539] 35. Another version added the words, "Have the strength of Hanuman! Hold the stick with the iron head! Be a student." For a girl, "If you have a family, keep cool and happy! Earn your livelihood (thammāhākin)! Have enough to use and eat! Do not lower (ram) your face, or eyes," i.e. "don't be poorer than your friend." A China-born Thai woman's blessing was "Mother, nourish, and care for this child. Do not let it be hurt or have fever."

Now that the fire was going nicely and Dŭan was "ready to warm her body," the all-important prayer and incantation "to control the hotness and poison" of the fire had to be pronounced lest the mother's body be "swollen or burned." Sāi took raw rice, salt, and alcoholic liquor[36] in her mouth, chewed them, and sprayed them over the fire and over Dŭan's body three times, saying "Spirit of the Fire and Wind, may both mother and baby be cool and happy!" and murmuring her secret formula with ancient Pali words about "great fire" and "death."[37] With the shoulder cloth (sabaichiang) that she always wore to the temple draped diagonally over her left shoulder and under her right arm, Dŭan knelt and faced the fire. Praying for happiness to the Mothers of the Fire, Fire-floor, and Wind, and finally to the Lord Buddha, the Holy Brotherhood of Priests, and the Sacred Law, she bowed, hands clasped, and touched the floor three times with her forehead. Then she rose and lay down on the plank with the holy fire on her right side.

As Dŭan was resting quietly, Sāi made three "taping fruits" (lūk yrakhop), balls of tamarind leaves, phlai, and salt wrapped in cloth. One was put well up between Dŭan's legs to cure the birth wound (phlēe). The other two were set aside for use on subsequent days. Sāi painted the baby's tongue with alcoholic medicine, and from her fingers dropped a little honey and boiled water into his mouth. Then she laid him on his tray on the floor close by Dŭan, on the side away from the fire.

With satisfaction of a job well done, Sāi and Lek sat together for a quiet chew of betel. "Lek," said Sāi, "has it occurred to you on what a good day this boy has been born? It is a Saturday, so he will have power. Nothing, nobody, can hurt him! Once I delivered a boy on that best

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36. Alcohol was heating; rice, strengthening. Salt appears to be drying.

37. The deities addressed were mǣ phra phlœng and mǣ phra phlai. Another Pali-Thai magic formula to control fire was: "Phra Mōk Khan Lē Mō will extinguish the fire from hell, na mō phut thā ya." Phra Mogdallana, one of the two most faithful disciples of Buddha, caused the fires of hell to go out (cf. Anuman Rajadhon 1961:137). The na mō...etc. was a traditional phrase to prevent spiritual dangers and is a repetition of the names of the Buddha in five incarnations, past and future (cf. Texter 1960:483-485).

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the fire for her during the first day or so, lest in her straining, DŭAn's womb "move to a new place," but Duan did it herself thereafter. The smoke was harder on others than for her for she was on the floor. She could leave the plank to bathe and to relieve herself through a crack in the floor. As soon as Chāi got over being frightened of her turmeric-yellow stomach, he often came and lay beside her on the plank, though it was a squeeze! She took her medicine and often sipped hot water, feeling very modern with her brand-new thermos bottle. Constantly turning her back or front to the fire, she poked or dripped water on the flames to make coals. Once she tossed on a dry palm leaf, and as it flared up, put a cloth over her head to trap the smoke and heat. Though a rash developed on her body, she was complimented by Lek on the care she was taking of the heating and drying process. Unfortunately, a neighbor who wanted to help brought in some of the wood one day. Not remembering that to make noise with the wood caused diseased red eyes in the baby, she dropped the bundle with a crash! Alas, "sang" disease, of course, came at once. So the near-by mō who always cared for them had to be called, but he used no medicine. "For eyes red from 'sang'," he said, "never use any eye-medicine as drops, or they will be permanently damaged or blind. Such eyes have not enough resistance to win over the strength of the medicine. A drop of mother's milk, any mother's, in the eyes is the cure." [753] [757]

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Uterus pain was said to last one day for the first child, 2 days for the second, and so forth, increasingly. As DŭAn seemed to be in considerable pain, Lek resorted to an old cure: she secretly took the bamboo knife and the phlai from the baby's tray and put them under Duan's plank bed without telling her. Slowly the pain diminished.

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If anyone spoke of uterus pain to her during the fire period, Duan would suffer still more. If a visitor spoke of the hotness of the fire, little boils would appear on her body. The fire, being thus made too hot, would have to be put out, and Duan "would be weak for a long time." This was because actions or even words occurring beside the holy fire set a new and permanent pattern. Neighbor's children were kept away lest they inadvertently exclaim about the heat.

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A few relatives with gifts of banana, turmeric, and face powder dropped in, but visitors mostly stayed away. "It is an ugly sight," said DŭAn, "lying here with only a cloth over me, half naked and yellow, and I fear there might be an unpleasant smell."

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The winnowing tray, with the baby on a pillow now covered with a plastic cloth, rested on a low table, the legs of which stood in bowls of water to keep away ants. At first an old dome-shaped fish trap had been set over it to prevent draft and

153 of making poor milk. Any woman whose milk flowed early and
853 well needed no example, for she was seen as having the habit as an in-born characteristic so deeply ingrained that it came through from a previous incarnation.[63] After nursing was established by the mother, babies were not often given over to another woman's breast because they were reputed to refuse it, "being not used to it."

In sum, the nursing patterns in Bang Chan varied with the previous lactating experience (if any) of the mother, and the ordinal position of her children.

(262 Hauck shows the old way of establishing good eating
846] habits in a baby. "If a mother ate small amounts of many different kinds of foods while lying by the fire, the child would not get diarrhea when he ate these foods for the first time" (1959:14). Through the beneficial effects of the fire, any deleterious qualities of the foods were eliminated (as we shall see in "The Fire of Maturity") and the child had his first experience with these foods in the breast milk.

153 Bang Chan's life was full of secondary opportunities for starting new habits. Every rice crop, every boat purchased, every house built, and all the rites of the life cycle could, if handled properly, start a fresh and fortunate sequence on its way. We shall have more to say of this in discussing maturity.

• 789 Imitation
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The familiar principle of imitation (Anuman Rajadhon: 154), the influence of like making for like, operated throughout daily life in Bang Chan. An action, event or presence emanated an analogous influence on its surroundings. A woman returned from a visit to the midwife with all possible speed in order to achieve a speedy delivery of her child a few weeks hence. Another pregnant woman visited the temple on the final day of the rainy-season Buddhist

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[829] 63. Bradley's informants gave an example of a deeply ingrained habit: "European and American mothers can better dispense [with the fire-rest] because their own mothers from time immemorial have never been in the practice of the custom, and consequently their constitutions do not at all require it (p.78)."

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retreat (ōk phansā) in order that her child would come out (ōk) more easily. Here none sought to divide the worlds of the natural and the supernatural, or to mark off "imitative magic" from the "learning by example of the natural world." A stronger influence came from more powerful agents, so that the effects of the Buddhist temple carried greater effect than the actions of a mere neighbor. Yet any like influence was of aid, especially in a verbal similarity. Thus, an event occurring on a Friday was apt to be auspicious because the Thai name for Friday contains an element identical in sound (though etymologically different) to the word for happiness (wansuk=Friday; suk=happiness), and for the fortunate status of true adulthood (suk=mature, ripe).

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Stability in a Floating World

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In explaining why some children were "born easily and were easy to raise" (liang ngāi) certain persons simply said, "They were born into the right family. Those born to the wrong family usually die." In defining the "right" family, merit, habituation, and helpfulness converge.

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Most families were thought to live together as a group in life after life. In view of the separateness of souls, how was this brought about? The key lay in the conviction that people who made merit together met in future lives. Since most merit-making was undertaken as an enterprise of the nuclear family, sometimes with close kinsmen and friends, they would find each other. Some of the eagerness of friends to help (chūai ngān) with cash or labor was in order to meet in later lives. These persons were used to each other, used to helping each other, and so might marry. Thus, if they lived rightly, the nuclear family, maybe with an infusion of beloved old friends, expected to carry on in the next existence. Although a family's prosperity proved its merit, and its wealth facilitated making more merit, continuity in time was not limited to the wealthy. Proof that a couple had been married in a previous life lay in the birth of a boy as first born. Such a couple was known as a "khū" (pair), and divorce was held to be highly unlikely.

How did a child find its "right" family? After whatever necessary stay in purgatory, the khwan soul of a deceased member roosted in a tree near to its old home, then flew into an accustomed womb. One recalls the start of the blessing (p. 48), "Come, khwan! Come my own child!" A woman hoped that the khwan was one previously born to her. "A couple lost its first child. Later the wife was fearing for the life of their sickly second-born." [redacted] husband said, "It is according to your sin and merit. If the child is your own child, he will live with you. If not, he cannot."

[774]

852 844 774 [608]

called out "Mine!" ("khǭng chan" [female speaking] or "phom" [male speaking]). Never did a parent say "ours!"[44] Sometimes the mother might ask a relative or friend present to claim the child, and so become a godparent.

As the first human step to control the volatile khwan, the first objective of winnowing a baby was to seize it (kan rap khwan) and so "complete" the child's person.[45] By tying holy thread at the wrist and ankle soul-exits, the khwan which had flitted in and out of the womb was given root. It was still flighty, but now it had a life-long home.

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Secondly, the child was given membership in a human family. Connection through blood and semen did not establish kinship. At first, the child hovered between corporeal and non-corporeal existence. "The child is not fully human for the first 3 days." This period was under the supernatural control of Mother Sǭ, for babies "never died during the first 3 days after birth. They might be born dead or they died 6 or 7 days later." The shock of dropping the child on the tray "made him forget his life as a spirit." When someone cried "mine!" the child finally cut his relationship with the spirit-world. As an old woman explained, "The ties are the important part [of the ceremony]. They show that the child belongs to someone. Once a tie fell off one wrist. The child cried and cried until it was restored," fearing its lost khwan would attach itself elsewhere. The claiming set up kinship as a contract before witnesses. Whoever announced responsibility for the child's care, and this was usually the mother, deserved reciprocal care in old age. Other relatives would also help to bring him through to maturity. He would not be so frightened of an evil spirit because of family support, nor of the "ghost of an ancestor" who would be recognized as a relative.

852 [774]

Third, the ceremony strengthened the child. By giving him through the ties a stable khwan, he "grew better, cried less, and did not get sick."

[856] [789]

The incorporation of as many auspicious elements as possible into the ritual was customary. Since the child took

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44. A winnowing tray (basket) had the capacity to "trap" spirits. It could seize or trap not only the khwan soul, but, at New Year's, one of the fun ghosts (Textor:371).

45. There is no convenient way of expressing "ours" in Thai in this restricted sense (id.).

852 after whoever claimed him, a mother might ask a "wealthy
856 person, of polite, calm, and good character" to do this.
• 789 The baby also started an association with whatever items were placed on his tray with him. Besides the most common ones mentioned in Dien's tale were ink and books (which induced learning); gold, rings, jewelry, money (wealth); bergamot thorn, a tin of kaffir lime (sharp wit); and a razor (a good wood-cutter for the fire; said to be a Muslim custom). When the baby was finally transferred from tray
852 to cradle these items were returned to household use. The
789 bamboo cutter, rhizome of phlai, and earth associated with cutting the cord were taken off the tray and buried with the placenta. Their significance lay as part of a binding ritual. The phlai and earth might be taken off ahead of time.

Binding Rituals

829 Because Bang Chan accorded autonomy to every individ-
774 ual, whatever his age, everyone had the free choice to go wherever his advantage lay. In infancy and childhood, the khwan soul might flee at any time, and could only be recaptured by a khwan-calling or khwan-leading rite (Textor: 896-911). After about the age of 8, a thaan khwan ceremony [852] helped to bind in and strengthen the khwan soul. In daily life, the fear that a loved one, whatever his age, would withdraw or run away if unhappy, frightened, or overburdened dogged people their whole lives. Casual episodes
829 were sometimes viewed with alarm. Once a boy of 10 on his
593 own initiative went off to live a few days with his grandmother only 10 minutes away by boat. His mother complained that he had wandered (pai thiaw) and feared it would become a habit. Parents dreaded that grown children would find work away from the village; that daughters would elope; that adopted children or spouses run away; or even that their child, at marriage, would elect to go live with his in-laws. At any time a husband might go into the priesthood leaving his wife and children to fend for themselves, though here the wife had to give her permission and the motive was sympathetically viewed.

A traditional jesting threat was to "go away to the jungle-forest" (pai paa).

The economic and social base for this fear of losing a child to the world was that children were a parental investment with an anticipated return: for the trouble of bearing and raising them, children should work for the family until their marriage. Furthermore, a boy was to bring his parents merit by being ordained, while a girl was to care for them in their old age. If a child moved away

before completing these obligations, the parents lost out on their anticipated reward (cf. L.M. Hanks, 1962).

Since waywardness (*ngai thiaw*) was considered a continuous threat, magical means were taken at the moment of birth to ensure that a child stay close to the family that raised him. The blessing following the winnowing ceremony invoked immovable things: the post, the cat that traditionally never roamed far, the pumpkin that sat and fattened:

> "...Stay at home like the bottom of the house post. Watch the house like a cat. Eat and stay here! Never leave home. Be fat and heavy as the ash pumpkin..."

The most important binding actions utilized, or brought the child into physical contact with, objects long associated with family, in particular the house and land. The umbilical cord was cut on earth or *phlai* dug from the house-land itself with a bamboo "knife" sliced from one of the deeply sunk house posts. Of these "the knife is the important thing." The *phlai* also had medicinal purposes. With a feather "from the mother's house" the baby's navel was smeared with cobwebs from a spider whose web indicated long undisturbed residence. They buried the placenta either under some large old tree that stood near the house, or under the house stair. The old family winnowing tray, old clothes, and well-used family possessions were used first before any new furnishings were purchased for the baby. A fire of *rakam* wood grown on premises boiled the water for the baby and mother, and heated the mother. *Rakam* was planted when a house was first built so that every generation of occupants would have it available for use at confinement" and also for firewood at other times (cf. Mcf. 81e). All these binding rites assured that the child being rooted to a home terrain, would not wander frightened, and so "would not cry." He also would be at hand to participate in the merit-making that would reconstitute the family in another existence.

If a child were born away from home, how was this bond to his locality established? On one to two occasions when the child was born at the Minburi Health Center, Mauck (notes, 1954) observed a solution to this dilemma. The mothers returned home, as was customary, within a few hours of delivery and were established by their respective fires. Their babies were winnowed and laid on their trays with the usual auspicious book, pencil, and needle. Neither tray held any bamboo, clod, nor *phlai*, however, for these had not been used. On one tray, though, was laid a steel knife from the kitchen, mute proof that a family cutting instrument ought to be there. On another occasion, a father asked to be given his child's placenta so as to bury it on the house site. In so far as possible, people in Bang Chan tried to carry on the old rites.

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000 in Bang Chan tried to carry on the old rites.

848 372 The Cone of Wood

When a child was conceived out of wedlock, the first problem raised was, "Who will build the wood pile?" The actual father had to come forward and identify himself, for he and no one else could perform this duty. A child could not be born without the father giving this assistance.

593 84 789 372 This cone of wood represented a "womb" towards which a father actively played out his role. His child was in it. While building it, his behavior affected the child, just as his wife's behavior acted on the child in her womb. If the pile were incomplete before the onset of labor or gave out before the fire-rest was terminated, the child would "never finish any task in its life." The very manifestation of industriousness involved in collecting the wood, though, made the unborn child industrious. Gathering a quantity of wood for this big pile was not easy. Old houses had plenty of wood, for they stood in thick groves, but new houses sometimes stood bare and stark in the fields. He placed spiny Indian jujube or Chinese date (phutsā) and Manila tamarind (ma khām thet) all over the outside to protect [824] this "womb" from invasion by malevolent spirits. Thus he also protected his wife's womb. Lakāo wood was preferred because it was smokeless. Collecting a mixture of woods was easier, but then the fire smoked. Mixed or all lakāo: whichever the constitution of the pile for a woman's first confinement set the pattern for all her later ones.

At the onset of labor, the father had to open the way for his child to come out of the womb, so the pile was tipped over in a direction paralleling the position of the Great Snake. This astrological orientation was exactly that of the woman in labor. Unless the mother's head and the apex of the fallen wood pile coincided with the direction of the head of the Snake, with the open end of womb and cone below, "with and not against [illegible] of the snake's scales," the child would have to struggle against these scales as he came out. By tipping the cone of wood properly the father helped his child to an easy exit.

The thorns protected the womb and the baby inside from all evil spirits during the months of pregnancy. With the onset of labor, the holy cord which surrounded the mother took over this function, and kept away such dangerous spirits as phi krasy and, if the baby died at birth, the violent New Baby Ghost (cf. Textor:261).

Even after the child was out, the pile of wood was still a drying womb to be treated carefully. It was also the wood for a consecrated fire. To drop a piece of this wood carelessly both injured and desecrated. If this happened a disease of the eyes "sang," came at once for which no male medical powers had any remedy. The only cure was in women's hands, that essence of maternity, "a drop of mother's milk--any mother's." The larger implications of this linking of fire and maternity are dealt with in the next section.

The Fire of Maturity

In the events surrounding the birth of the child, the significant step for the woman personally was the post-partum rest period by the fire (yū fai). Far more was at stake than just drying the uterus. The fire rest was one of the series of rites of the life-cycle which marked the course of an individual from birth to death. The others were the cutting of the umbilical cord, first head shaving, top-knot tonsure, ordination (for men), marriage, and cremation. Through the consecrated fire a woman formally achieved full maturity: she became suk (cooked, ripe, mature). Maturity did not come just by bearing a child. The fire brought about the transformation.[46]

How was mature womanhood viewed? What was the essential female role and office? Bang Chan saw a woman as one who "feeds and lengthens lives." As the custodian of growth she was, first, the guardian of the vital, essential khwan soul, and especially of the immature, flighty khwan of growing persons.

Secondly, a woman was a donor of nourishment (liang).[47] Her primary responsibility was to nurture children and other tender beings. She nourished the fetus with her blood. After

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46. "The fiery element digests what is eaten or drunk...and cooks the body and gives it its beauty of complexion. And the body thus cooked is kept free from decay" (Warren:157-158).

47. All the deities "concerned with the welfare of our bodies and our khwan" were maternal (mae), e.g. Rice, Water, Earth, "Mother-Goddess" (Mae Sū), and several Mother-Princesses (Chao Mae). Fire, and maybe wind, were both female (mae) and male (phra) (Textor:485). To these deities, "higher" than ordinary spirits, Bang Chan "owed more."

Only when the youngster was satiated did she gobble the remainder.[50] Parents often commented that girls in general were obedient and good, but boys were not. Everyone spoke, however, of exceptions. The capacity to play the female role grew with the child. It was not completed with the physiological maturity of first menstruation but only with ritual maturity.

The rituals to fit a woman for her office, described as "directly related to the welfare of the child," had 4 specific purposes. They perfected her as a compassionate being; restored and strengthened her body; improved her capacities as a nourisher; and strengthened her own khwan. The key to each of these aims was the holy fire.[51] Because actions taken by the fire were immediately and permanently effective, every effort was made to induce auspicious happenings. Words spoken by the fire had compelling effect so even ordinary speech became magical. Speaking of the fire's hotness so raised its heat that a mother was burned. For this reason, uninformed or careless visitors like children or foreigners were a danger.

According to Buddhist thinking, suffering developed compassion. Through the discomfort of pregnancy, followed by the anguish of childbirth and the heat of the fire, a woman became compassionate and so achieved the guide-line for moral behavior. Then a woman was sure to be touched with pity for the younger or less fortunate. One teacher despite the inconvenience went home twice a day from school to nurse her new baby because she "pitied" him too much to hire a wet-nurse. It was "pitiful" to see a child at another woman's breast for it implied that its mother was either unwilling or unable to nurse it. Thus, babies were rarely nursed by others than their own mothers.

The fire also strengthened a woman by ridding her of bad blood and foul fluids. Wind and Fire, the 2 spirit guardians of the elements necessary to the occasion, were invoked to assist in the drying of the uterus. In addition, strengthening

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50. Boys too fed their younger siblings but their purpose was a power-play: "to assure obedience in the future" (cf. Hanks and Phillips:648).

51. This fire was kept entirely separate from the one for cooking and boiling of water. It was ritually lit and ritually extinguished at the end of the fire-rest.

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Thus she performed several rites involving the maintenance of the immature khwan of children and of rice.[54]

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The acme of maternal virtues was manifested in the "good nourishers" (lĭang dī). These women had borne many children who "nursed and slept well, did not cry, and easily established good habits." They were lĭang dī not just because of the time spent by the fire, for that time could be matched by persons who had lost babies. They were special persons of more than usual capacities for success in nurture. Good to have around for their auspicious influence, they were called upon to inaugurate or help processes concerned with health and growth. They performed, or caught the child in the winnowing ceremony, or gave babies their first suck. They were the persons to whom a sickly child was brought so that his health might be improved by calling the soul and tying holy cord at wrist and ankle (riak khwan). [755] [774]

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54. If a child indfcated by continuous crying that he had lost his khwan, a mature (suk) woman had to be asked to call it back ritually and re-tie it into the body with sacred cord at wrist and ankle. There was no special magic. Her words suffice. Khwan-ladling, a more elaborate and compelling form of the same ceremony, used magical formulae (Textor:401-402). One of Phillips' sentence-completion tests was, "If one is frightened, the best thing to do is..." Of the respondents, 7 women, including one Muslim, would set to work to "call back the khwan" (Phillips:267-268). No man suggested the latter.

562 243 789

In the agricultural rites, women handled the rice's khwan in basically the same way when it was immature: inviting the young Rice Goddess to stay and grow in the field, and transporting to the house the child-like seed that only next year would grow to maturity. For these rites a woman used an incantation if she knew one. That she could also handle the rice khwan by speaking "extemporaneously" (Textor:429), indicated that her mere words were enough. If no one else were available, a non-suk woman could call the khwan of a child or of the Rice Mother by reason of her in-born female potency, but could not "ladle" a khwan.

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When the khwan was mature (after a person was about age 10) men took over its care. In the men's thăm khwan (khwan-strengthening) rite, here, too, women were the ones to carry off the cloth-and-leaf covering of the bàisī (tiered offering) into which the khwan had flitted during the ceremony. The rice-ceremony at the threshing floor was a thăm khwan, so was performed by men.

885 deprived a man of his masculine strength but was expected to
793 change him into a kind and merciful being.[58] It took at least
562 a three month season (phansā) in the priesthood to make a man
785 mature, responsible, and effective. That this moral fitness
[778] was not obtained overnight was given vivid illustration: if a
Buddha Amulet, designed for invulnerability, failed to be effective when tested by having a gun fired at it, it was "sometimes jokingly dismissed as a monk (phra) who has just been ordained (bwat mai)" (Textor:529). This interesting episode illuminates
• 789 one other important result achieved by both men and women in
885 their respective maturation rites: authorization to handle magic.

Magic and Maturity

In Bang Chan, magic was powerful. Whatever the purpose, whether beneficial or nefarious, it was effective if all conditions were met. Lest such power fall into unscrupulous hands, the community limited its availability and use to those who had gained the moral qualities and fitness to handle it wisely. Only the ritually mature could be counted on to be compassionate, strong, responsible adults, and so were permitted access to occult powers. Whether by ordination or the fire-rest, to be suk was an absolute prerequisite to magical knowledge. It did not give magical power, but qualified one to seek it out. Since no career in medicine was possible without magic, no man could be a mo who had not been previously ordained.

789 The uses of magic by men had entirely different objectives
562 from those of women. Their respective fields did not

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58. "A monk was changed...to be meek and mild." By seeking his morning alms he "show(s) mercy towards creatures" (prot sat) (Anuman Rajadhon:76-77). Women's tenderness in their maternal function was not associated with shyness. A compassionate woman with a strong winyān soul (which projected the quality of the heart) was enterprising and effective (cf. J.R. Hanks, 1959). Where sexual characteristics were confused, instability in behavior appeared. The cultural expectation was that children and women were delicate (ōn), older people and men were hard (khaeng). "A male who is easily induced to convulse is one who had a 'soft' heart (čhai ōn). ...and also a 'soft' khwan (khwan ōn).....Such a young man is excitable rather than predictable and dependable, and hence is cause for parental anxiety" (Textor:405).

overlap at all. Magic was wielded by men to gain power over spirits, persons, elements, and forces. It had either social or personal benefits. The role of highest social benefit, corresponding to the liāng dī in women, was the khwan-specialist (mǭ khwan) who conducted the life-cycle, khwan-strengthening (thām khwan) (for persons and for the rice) and many other ceremonies for the mature khwan. This role demanded men of the highest qualifications in probity, erudition, and personal dedication. Men also had the formulas for curing, house- or boat-blessing, invoking guardian spirits (sān phrá phūm), etc. Men could make protective amulets to render the wearers safe from bullets, knives, spirits, and all sorts of hostile forces in the world.

On the other hand men's magical objectives could be aggressive and hostile. The gamut of amulets, missiles, love-oil, and incantations (Textor:passim) showed the potential for attack and why the converse need for invulnerability was so strong. Men had a nurturing (liāng) role, but only for non-human beings, e.g. buffalo, pet birds, and guardian spirits of house and land. Subverting this role for hostile ends, they obtained possession of the ghost of a recent corpse by gathering the drop of oil at the chin, and nourishing it (liāng) for use in sorcery. For a man, nourishing something gave control.

All of the powers of men's magic were available to women on request for any purpose, hostile or not, but the "owner" had to be the mediating agent.

A woman's magical knowledge was linked exclusively to her female task. It did not give power over people. It could not be destructive. No female sorceress existed in Bang Chan. No woman feared the magic of another woman in childbirth nor at any time. A woman's magic was devoted solely to promoting the processes of growth and life. Thus it controlled the searing heat of the fire, invoked the Spirits of the 4 elements, and helped at various points in childbirth. It handled the soul of the Rice Goddess and of Mother Sū, guardian of children. It restored any frail and wandering khwan to its proper bodily abode. Such was a woman's magic.

To insure separateness the respective provinces of magical activity were ringed with sanctions. Contact with a woman's skirt, undergarments, or menstrual blood completely negated any of a man's protective amulets (re tattooing, cf. Textor: 102). Though this reflected the traditional avoidance between sexual phenomena and Buddhism, it might also indicate a tacit moral evaluation of the magical powers of men and women: the powers for growth were ultimately ascendant over those for power, for men had nothing that undid a woman's powers. Though women were easily prey to man's magical control, as by

562 789 [754] [787] love philters, and they might be "sealed up" in childbirth or attacked by khun, their capacities to "liang" were inalienable. If any woman tried to tamper with men's magic, a severe sanction fell on her. She became the host of the phī krasū who lived from faeces like a dog.[59] On the other hand in a legendary case a man who tried to perform one of the women's rites to the Rice Mother was destroyed.[60] Furthermore, the Buddhist sanction of sinfulness fell on any man using magic for evil purposes.

562 791 [755] [793] The single channel where women might operate in the men's field of curing, power, clairvoyance, etc. was as a medium (khon song), through possession by a spirit. If possessed by a male mō, she could do everything a mō could do. Men were never mediums. Bang Chan's only medium was possessed by a male mō.[61] During seances she talked and sat like a man, and gave out cures and advice to an eager clientele. Only while wearing the yellow robe of an ordained priest did a man enjoy a generalized eufunction comparable to a woman's nurturing capacity. His powers in many respects were far greater than hers, but limited in her speical province.

[832] [156] [688] [626] [593] 59. My finding is based on Textor's interesting facts (pp. 305-330). He described the hosts of phī krasū as married women ("never a maiden") in their 30's or 40's, who were "invariably" trying to learn love magic. Such women were, however, violating their sexual function as nurturant and worse, their status as "suk" women, ritually established by the holy fire! Ostracism by the community, implemented by fear of contagion through spittle, lasted even unto the deathbed. The phī krasū's daughter alone was immune while giving the devoted care which was every mother's due in her old age, for Bang Chan desired no alienation of this filial duty even out of fear of the terrible sanction on the mother.

[539] [776] 60. The legend ran that once a man instead of a woman went into the rice field to perform the ritual inviting of the Rice Goddess to stay there and be cared for with food and offerings during her pregnancy. The goddess he met was not an immature and tender child-like spirit, but the adult, pregnant being who was powerful, flirtatious, and frightening. Dazzled by her beauty he fell in love with her, and ran away with her, vanishing forever. The goddess, affronted because an improper person arrived to deal with her, destroyed him.

[825] [787] 61. In Bangkok, monkey, cats, or spirits may also possess women.

1: Hanks E-5 (1953-1954) 1964 AO7 Central Thai AO7

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The medium's powers as a หมอ appeared to be entirely equivalent to a man's.

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To summarize, the fire-rest enabled a woman to acquire fruitful habits, new status, and the right to handle magic. The implications of the ritual clarified the role of women and the associated symbolism of rice, and by contrast the role of men. The nature of the magical resources available to each sex laid the groundwork for a career in midwifery for women, and for men, a career as a หมอ.

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Comparison of the respective rites of maturation points up certain contrasts and parallels between men and women. Women achieved compassion and maturity through their sexual role, while men achieved these qualities by denying their masculinity. Even a bounty of merit, which a man achieved directly by ordination, came to a woman through procreation, by the ordination of a son, or as a wife if her husband were ordained. Many activities were done by either sex, but each had certain exclusive proprietary areas. If women were donors of nourishment, men too had their donor roles, sexual, economic, religious, etc. Each paralleled the other in the formal steps to maturity, building the way for a complementary social and marital partnership for which both were ritually and psychologically well prepared.[62]

62. In contrast, note the psychological ill-preparedness, leading to severe tensions in Ceylon (Oberesekere, passim).

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in the khwan khaō "gift" handy cash. The income was about 40 to 200 baht ($2.00 to $20.00) per year.

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The duties of a midwife were not time consuming if all went well. There was practically no pre-natal care, and a few hours of care was given for only three days after birth. If complications arose, though, the midwife spent long hours away from home. In fact the husband of one midwife grumbled, "You don't receive anything, and just waste time. Sometimes you stay away over night, and no one watches the house or the children."

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In their social role, midwives felt personal but not group solidarity. A solid bond existed between an older midwife and the particular younger one to whom he or she had given training and magic. Those related by blood or marriage sometimes worked together, and even turned over cases to each other if outside demands became pre-eminent. If in trouble on a case, midwives did not call on each other unless as close, affectionate relatives but turned rather for help from a mō or to the Mīnburī Health Center. Yet sometimes rivalry was severe. If the family of the parturient felt that no progress was being made with one midwife, they called in another and another. Each did his utmost and then stepped down when it had to be admitted, "My magic is not enough." The final expert who brought mother and baby through before the deposed midwives glowed inwardly with pride and skill and satisfaction that the magic of his particular teacher had proved effective. The sharpness of the competition reverberated through the words, "I pushed the other midwives down." Community standing or "face" was not lost by an unsuccessful case because of the midwives' fundamental role as helpers only, their faith in their own experiences, and again, the conviction that the course of childbirth was merit-determined.

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Though living like other elder citizens of the community; in their social role they were more respected. Known as selfless donors of time and energy for the sake of others, whose successes gave proof of merit and nurturing capacity, they were viewed as assets to the community. In spite of competition considerable affection was evident between some. They were elders before a sea of youth, old friends who had for years lived and farmed side by side, met at ceremonies, and shared many experiences.

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If the case were in difficulty sometimes a mō was called, sometimes a midwife or even both. What was the nature of their respective specialties? What in fact made certain midwives "professionals" (tham ačhīp [Mc.F. 990]) when others who had equal or more experience were not so considered?

759 In these 2 qualifications of skill and success, some of the explicitly non-professional old ladies were recognized as easily matching the professionals. What then was the definition of a professional midwife?

759 What the professional midwives alone did was to deliver
789 non-kin, for which they had to have magical formulae and reliable celestial knowledge. The incantations gave a midwife the right to be called a mɔ̄ tamyaa, for he or she was using to a greater or lesser extent the sacred wisdom of occultism (saiyasāt). Here midwifery was like any other craft or endeavor. One could cure, sing, and build a boat without magic, but with it, the chances of success and effectiveness were increased. The incantations could "ease delivery," "get a baby out that had died inside"(for this baby could no longer do his part), "prevent the poison of the fire from burning the mother," and give other special help. That this magic was the crucial difference between the professional and non-professional was illustrated by the old lady who had delivered 30 babies, but vehemently[67] denied being a midwife. "I am not a professional. I have no magic. I only pray to the Lord Buddha and think of sacred things each time."

759 A professional also had more detailed astrological
787 knowledge of the orientations of relevant celestial beings so that delivery would be "helped and not obstructed." This knowledge was in no way a professional secret, but if complications during childbirth were evident, it was necessary to have accuracy, and convenient that the midwife had it.

759 To certain villagers the designation "professional"
562 could not be applied to women because, never having been
212 ordained, they had not learned to read, as men supposedly
191 had, not only Thai but Pali and Cambodian, the languages of
778 medical and magical lore. "A professional midwife has a book. No woman can become professional because she cannot read." The idea was that incantations were correct only if taken from the sacred texts at the temple, though in fact the formulae were taught orally. One male midwife had a sacred book in his private possession, which was proper, for

sacred books were inherited by males.

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67. Her vehemence may reflect either pride in being so successful without magic--a true liang dī--fear of being reported as unlicensed (see below, p. 145); or consternation lest she be accused of using magic to which she was not entitled.

759 [465] Although as to fees, they said, "It is as you please," these women received as a rule the higher honoraria of 10, 20, and 30 baht. They did not have a separate teacher-rite but paid their respects during regular temple events, such as offering a pig's head and the other items during someone's ordination, though the Muslim midwife had her modified teacher-rite in a separate home ceremony, not at the mosque (cf. [212] [214] Appendix:Muslim Customs). It was even said of the best female midwife that "she had a book." She was literate in Thai. Even if her book were a popular astrological guide, it carried the reverence accorded all books. Whatever it was, its possession increased her aura of reliability. [789] Though the women did not receive their magic at the temple but rather from a kinsman in the maternal line, their incantations, which appeared to be in the Pali-Thai tradition, were no less effective.

759 The professional midwives, both men and women, saw themselves as individual custodians of sacred knowledge and competent in a technique. They were not only interested and ready, but obligated to give expert care to anyone, anywhere it was needed.

The non-professional midwives always thought of themselves as voluntary helpers of kinsmen, acting "out of pity," and carrying on their female responsibility for new life as [562] older women helping their younger relatives. The idea of giving nurture and assistance was so deeply ingrained in the female office that the professional midwives saw themselves fundamentally as volunteers.

Learning Midwifery

The decision to deliver a daughter or a wife was not momentous. One did not have to be "suk" to deliver a baby. The same practical and compassionate motives that led a mother or husband to do this led some of these people to seek out professional techniques so that they might "help more." One woman, bearing her own child at 25 with intense suffering, became angry (chep thai) because "the midwife did nothing to help, but just sat and chewed betel while others did all the work." In desperation she called in her own mother to deliver her. She also "felt she had many relatives who would need her help." Another was asked by her mother's brother, a midwife, to accompany him as he was getting too old. He then gave her his magic. A man took up the specialty after his first child, a son, died at birth from ineptness, he thought, of the midwife. Another man, though, took it up as a "minor extra" to his career as a mō. All learned the skill by accompanying and helping an

759 sought, ritually requested of some relative who was a mid-
571 wife.[70] Some persons though continued to limit themselves
602 to delivering their relatives, and never sought magic at all.

Two Worlds: The Natural and the Supernatural

759 To deliver a baby as a midwife or even as an unskill-
772 ed kinsman, embraced 2 aspects: a manual or technical, and a magical. These aspects corresponded to Bang Chan's 2 great worlds of knowledge and experience: the natural and the supernatural.

Midwifery was not alone in embracing both of these categories. Every activity, bus-driving, dancing, printing, or other, had its incorporated magical means to augment the probability of success. Though with the manual or technical skills of the natural world alone one could come through all right with even a modicum of supernatural help, success was greater. No one wanted to take the responsibility and risks of "going it alone" especially when the resources of the supernatural world were so freely and easily accessible to everyone. At the very least, one could start an enterprise on Friday (Wan Suk: Happy Day). The closer an enterprise was to the margin of life and death, however, the larger the supernatural element. In farming, curing, and midwifery, for instance, the ritual component was strong.

[874] Since these 2 worlds were qualitatively different, each required a different method of learning. The supernatural world, immaterial, royal and sacred, was learned

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[789] 70. Three women had recieved theirs from their mother, mother's mother, and mother's older brother, respectively. A retired midwife planned to give hers "to the daughter or grandchild ("lan":sex not specified) who was interested enough to ask for it." One man had received his from his father's father. Childbirth magic would hardly be a suitable topic of conversation between priests, but it might have been passed down there, too. The midwife whom one accompanied while learning probably was the source of one's magic. Women's magic was passed down the maternal line only, whereas men could get theirs both from kinsmen and at the temple.

by instruction from a ritually[71] approached teacher. "One cannot accidentally learn. One has to ask to be taught." As a practitioner in this field, the title "mɔ̄" signalized expertise; where teaching was involved, the title was khrū (teacher [McF. 183]) or ācān (professor [McF.990]). Speech was the key to this tradition, in spite of sacred books and wall-carvings in the temples.[72] Modern education, being book-and-teacher based, shared in this aura. There, even today, listening is more comfortable than reading.

Techniques of the practical, natural world were learned not by teaching but pragmatically by observation, example and experience. Eyes were the key. "I know because I saw," said a midwife. At the highest level of achievement in the natural world one was expert (nak), e.g. convict (nak thōt, an expert in being punished) a tourist (nak thīao, an expert in roaming around).[73] Within the natural world, an intense pragmatism reigned always emphasizing visual phenomena. People were keenly

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71. To speak ritually one held in the hand the trio of incense, flowers, and a candle. This was the way to cross over from the profane to the sacred world, to inform (bɔ̄k) or make a request of, a sacred being (a teacher, priest, king, or deity). The tiny flame of the offering invoked holy fire, and so had the effect of making one's words compelling, for no one could gainsay a request under such circumstances. A husband about to deliver his wife held incense, flower, and candle in hand as he requested the help of ancestors and spirits. (Bishop Pallegoix saved the existence of his mission by thus approaching the King [Pallegoix, Vol. 2:201]). The trio of offerings, whether at the 4 corners of the lying-in fire-floor, or in "bat phlī krathong" at a "than khwan" rite, or even in an ordinary khwan khan made all actions and words compelling.

72. Because words, immaterial and invisable, lay at the base of occultism, words as continuous agents of power permeated Bang Chan's ordinary daily life. This was why words, verbal play, and punning initiated action: pregnant women attended the monks' "coming out of retreat" (ɔ̄k phansā) so that the child would "come out" (ɔ̄k) easily.

73. It should not be forgotten that most activities in the supernatural world had their technical sides, and the term "nak" was used there too. A curer had to learn his herbs; a dancer, his steps; and a master of ceremonies, the words of the chants.

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home brew; rub-on medicine (yā chup) instead of a fire or fire-container; canned cows' milk, and nursing bottles for the baby, and the bottles washed with salt; the transfer of a baby from the tray to the cloth cradle before the termination of the fire-rest because "he needed fresh air;" and the rejection of the turmeric rub against the wind element as "dirty and ugly."

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To use modern medical care was becoming prestigeful. Most spectacular here was a case of a prosperous and educated man who had had 9 children, then "feared he could not feed them all," so underwent voluntarily a vasectomy. Patronage of the second class doctors who used modern medications but explained them in traditional terms was frequent among the well-to-do. The Mīnburī Health Center, a resource in case of over-long and difficult labor, was beginning to be seen as a fashionable place to go for medical care and parturition. The case of the 7 teachers who laid plans ahead to go to the Center (but their quick labor precluded attempting to get there) showed that prestige had a stronger lure than convenience at times. It was much more convenient to bear a child at home, yet one of these teachers even talked about wanting to be delivered in Bangkok at the Woman's Hospital, an extreme of prestige and practical inaccessibility.

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The drive toward progressiveness led to conscious re-examining of those "old ways" that could be visually tested. One woman said, "There are fewer spirits (phī) nowadays." There was the mother who pondered the maxim about burning up all the wood collected by the husband to make a child finish tasks when he grow up. Finding it not true, she abandoned it at her next confinement. A man said that the old belief that papaya should not be planted near the house because "it dies easily and doesn't like water," and so would affect a child, was "unreasonable because the harm was not specific [e.g. a threat to skin or eyes]. If specific, I might believe it." An opening wedge of disbelief was noted where a woman gave no bit of rice to her baby to start a habit for later benefits because "she was told but didn't believe it," and another who said the "winnowing rite was not important."

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In addition to prestigeful changes were those due to individual circumstance, taste or preference, and convenience unaffected by social aspirations. One woman rejected going to the Mīnburī Center for delivery and took up the hot-ashes container instead of a fire because she could better direct her older children, and "it was less hard on them." A poor woman took no medicine during pregnancy because she had no money to buy it. A comment that of recent years medicines were purchased because "women are too lazy to make them up" as in the old days, sounded more personal than socially significant. A change induced by lack of money was that "hot spices

The Muslim khwan khao contained 7 795
items"--a young (or ripe) coconut with its water; thread or 782
"a skein of yarn"(used not to tie in the khwan but "for the 844
teacher"); 7 pieces or areca nut; 7 betel pepper leaves; 789
one "heavy" (15 gram) yellow wax candle; one "bag" of incense; 759
rice; and 30 baht in money.[78] The khwan khao was not offered with the idea of its reaching phra In (Indra) ultimately, but rather the local princely spirits of the land, chao thi, chao thān, and Mae Thoranī (Mother Earth). It was waved 3 times by the midwife over the abdomen of the woman in labor with the prayer: "Spirits of the land, Mother Earth, may the delivery be easy!" The khwan khao was then placed at the mother's head. The woodpile was knocked over so as to point to Mecca, which was west, a direction avoided by the Buddhists. "When nearly ready to deliver, a Muslim midwife turns the mother's face in the direction where the family's hens hatch their chicks. If they have no chicken, then in any direction."[79] If delivery were slow, a Buddhist mō was called to "shift the mother to new places" until the baby came out.

Muslim women lay post-partum by a fire for the usual 795
physiological reasons. In making up the fireplace, instead of 846
a cluster of incense, flowers, and a candle, this purely Hindu- 372
Brahman-Buddhist trio, they sprinkled salt "to keep away evil 789
spirits" on the dirt at the corners. Salt, oil, or alcohol [759]
was spewed over the fire and the woman's body, or only magic
was recited, "to control the poison of the fire." "Of these,
salt is best," said a Muslim midwife, but "whichever a midwife
used first has to be continued for the rest of her life as her
way of doing things, because the habit has been started that
way." The Muslim magic for controlling the fire was "ōm ming
ōm fūn ōm fai sawā hāi." "So be it, stove, rocks (or mountains),
fire, be cool, may a blessing rest to you," though "ōm" is the
Pali-Buddhist "mystical word." The placenta was not put in a
pot beside the fire, but was washed by the midwife several times
until perfectly clean, then was mixed with salt and buried in 795
the dirt directly under the fire. When the fire was finally 844
destroyed, the placenta was dug up, washed again, and immediately
buried (not in a pot), with the

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78. There was some evidence that the thread and incense were included only when a Muslim midwife was delivering a Buddhist woman.

79. To the Muslims this was an act of imitative magic. The Buddhists saw the action of a setting hen as a quick source of information for the parturient's orientation. The hen always avoided the direction of the phī luang (Textor:378).

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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152 571 ritualized, ways of expressing hostility. What is significant about these particular procedures is that their very formalism serves to keep the aggression controlled and within bounds. Thus, everybody knows precisely how to behave when a buffalo disappears in the middle of the night and an intermediary arrives the next day to arrange the price for its return. Similarly, the aggressor, his victim, and everyone else present knows what is meant when someone calls a dog by the name of a person who is within hearing range and claims it was simply a slip of the tongue. The victim might respond by stealing his antagonist's boat and returning it a few weeks later, after his adversary has suffered sufficient anxiety. Note that in all these cases a face-to-face confrontation is either avoided or concealed.

152 571 754 Related to the above is the use of magical aggression. Textor (1960) points out that magical aggression—from one *person* to another *person*—is on the wane in Bang Chan. Also, it is clear from his exhaustive inventory of the magical practices in the village that interpersonal aggression has a very minor part in what is otherwise an extremely elaborate belief and ritual system: there are no more than three or four supernatural "objects," out of more than one hundred and seventy, that even suggest witchcraft, and although these objects are considered highly potent, they are rarely used. Even in the most extreme case—a young man using the oil from the chin of a corpse to induce hysteria in a maiden who has rebuffed his advances[9]—the victim is held partially responsible for having succumbed to the magic, a consideration that diminishes the "magical" implications of the ritual.[10]

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152 762 Finally, a word should be said about the most convoluted way of expressing aggression. This is suicide, a procedure which, obviously, is applicable to only a small number of people. Nevertheless, during the relatively brief period that I was in the field, three Bang Chaners (out of a population of 1,771) attempted to do away with themselves by hanging. They always selected a conspicuous place (a tree on the Minburi highway or over the main canal) and were always unsuccessful. The aggression here is convoluted not only because it is turned inward, but also because it is

[9] This blending of sex and aggression does not have the same meaning in Bang Chan as it has in the West. Although the young man is concerned with punishing the girl for not responding to him, he is more concerned with breaking down her defenses and equilibrium, the very factors which denied him access. In English terminology, he wants to "unhinge" her, with all the duality that such symbolism might imply.

[10] While magical aggression between people is relatively minor, magical means of averting aggression by non-human forces is not. In fact, the largest number of magical practices in Bang Chan relate to protecting the health and welfare of the organism from malevolent spirits, accidents, and dangerous animals. These data, of course, are quite consistent with the SCT data on "anxiety," presented in the preceding section.

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